

**Erziehungsdirektion
des Kantons Bern**

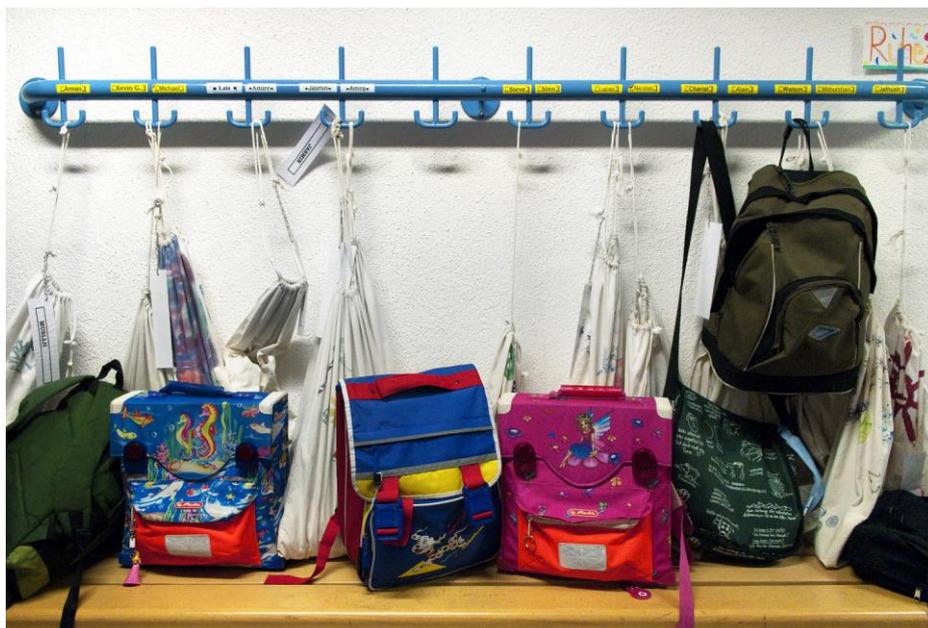
Amt für Kindergarten,
Volksschule und Beratung

**Direction de
l'instruction publique du
canton de Berne**

Office de l'enseignement
préscolaire et obligatoire, du
conseil et de l'orientation

Compulsory schooling in the Canton of Bern

Information for parents German-speaking part of the canton



Elterninformation für den deutschsprachigen Kantonsteil

Englisch

Foreword by the Director of Education

Dear parents,

In our first years of learning, our lives revolve around pre-school and school. Children at this age are plunged into a fascinating world where being part of a class with other children is very important.

I believe that in this situation the priority should always be on the child's well-being, his or her relationship to the teaching staff and the parents' trust in the school. The stable and future-oriented partnership between school and parents creates a foundation for the children's further academic development. This interaction is something that is very close to my heart.

As parents, you can make a big contribution to the success of this venture and help your child through his or her school career with your care and support. We have compiled some important information to help you find your way around our school system in this brochure.

You will find answers to many questions, including:

- How are compulsory schools organised?
- What is expected of parents?
- What can I do to ensure that my child feels comfortable at school and learns well?

The teachers and headmaster or headmistress in your child's school will be happy to provide any further information you may need. Please also take a look at our website www.erz.be.ch and that of your municipality and your child's school.

We hope that both you and your child enjoy the time at pre-school and school.



Bernhard Pulver
Director of Education in the Canton of Bern



Bernhard Pulver, Director of Education

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Note

The Canton of Bern is split into a German-speaking part and a French-speaking part. The information in this brochure refers to the German-speaking part of the canton. Important terms in German are highlighted in green.

1 In a nutshell

General information

Allgemeines

- Compulsory schooling usually lasts for eleven years. Children usually enter pre-school at the age of four. After compulsory schooling, the children either complete a two to four-year apprenticeship, where they learn a profession, or start their post-compulsory education.

	Higher secondary level Sekundarstufe II Vocational training or general education programme	2-4 years
Pre-school and school Volksschule	Lower secondary level (years 7 – 9) Sekundarstufe I compulsory <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Taught on two or three different requirements levels - Prepares for choice of career 	3 years
	Primary level (years 1 – 6) Primarstufe compulsory <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assessment procedure in years 5 and 6: assignment to a requirements level for the lower secondary level 	6 years
	Pre-school Kindergarten Compulsory, begins at the age of 4	2 years

- All children are entitled to attend compulsory school at their place of residence free of charge. The municipality provides pupils with the teaching and school materials for free.
- Boys and girls are taught together. The educational goals are identical for both sexes.
- State compulsory schools are non-denominational, in other words they do not uphold any single set of religious beliefs. Various religions are discussed in class for the purposes of general education and an upbringing that teaches respect for people with different opinions and beliefs. As ours is a predominantly Christian society, customs related to Christian feasts and celebrations, such as Christmas, have a place in the curriculum. The religious freedom of all children and adolescents as well as their parents is nevertheless guaranteed at all times.

Private (independent) schools also exist alongside compulsory schools. They require the approval of the education department and charge school fees.

- Children and adolescents with a physical or mental disability attend a compulsory school wherever possible or a special-needs school that caters for their disability. You can obtain information on suitable schools and support (including for children under the age of four) from the cantonal educational counselling centre in your region: www.erz.be.ch/erziehungsberatung

School year and school holidays

Schuljahr und Schulferien

The school year begins in the middle of August and ends at the beginning of July. Children and adolescents are taught for 38 or 39 weeks per year. The holidays are spread over the school year.

Autumn break in September, October: three weeks

Winter holidays in December, January: two weeks

Sports break: one week

Spring break in April: two weeks

Summer holidays in July, August: five weeks

You should ask your local municipality for the exact dates of the school holidays and public holidays.

Timetable

Stundenplan

Classes are taught from Monday to Friday. One lesson lasts 45 minutes. At least four lessons are taught in the morning, in instruction blocks beginning and ending at the same times (block times). Teaching hours in the afternoon vary (two to four lessons). Depending on their year, children have between two and four afternoons free. There are no lessons on Wednesday afternoons in the pre-school and for years 1 to 6. Your child's timetable for the coming year will be published by the class teacher.

As parents you must ensure that your child attends school according to the timetable. You are responsible for your child when classes are not in session and when he or she is on the way to or from school.

Please also read the sections on 'Absences and dispensations' (p. 4) and 'Parents and compulsory school' (p. 10).



Day school

Tagesschule

When there is sufficient demand, municipalities offer a day school for compulsory school children who need **supervision** before instruction begins, over midday or after instruction ends; this is generally provided within the compulsory school premises.

The day school can consist of three different types of supervision:

- Early supervision, before lessons start
- Midday supervision with a meal
- Afternoon supervision after lessons are finished or on afternoons when no lessons are scheduled

The midday and afternoon supervision also includes help with homework. Parents can choose from these three types to suit their needs. A fee will be charged for day schools. The amount of the fee depends on the income, assets and size of the family.

Visit www.erz.be.ch/tagesschulen for more information about day schools or ask your class teacher or the headmaster or headmistress.

Further possibilities for child care and supervision outside the family (day-care facilities for children, professional care-givers, etc.) can be found at www.gef.be.ch > Familie

Homework

Hausaufgaben

Homework supplements normal lessons and helps children achieve a better understanding of what has been taught in class. Make sure that your child has somewhere quiet where he or she can do his/her homework.

Children should be able to complete their homework without any help from parents. If you notice that your child is having problems with his or her homework, get in touch with his or her teacher as soon as possible.

Reports

Beurteilung

The class teacher and the parents come together for a **meeting** at all levels at least once a year to discuss the child's progress, work behaviour and social behaviour.

Children in years 1–6 receive a written **report** at the end of each school year. The report provides information on the extent to which the child has achieved the learning targets in the individual subjects. Starting in year 3, the reports also contain grades documenting the child's performances. Pupils in years 7–9 receive a written report at the end of each term. This also contains an appraisal of working and learning habits.

The grading scale ranges from 1 to 6 (6 = best grade, below 4 = learning targets have not been reached). Half grades can also be awarded (e.g. 5.5 or 4.5).

Please follow the link below for more detailed information in various languages:

www.erz.be.ch/ beurteilung > Elterninformation

Absences and dispensations

Absenzen und Dispensationen

- As parents you are obliged to send your child to pre-school or school for the times shown in the timetable. Parents who deliberately keep their children out of school may be fined.
- Parents must inform the teachers why their child was not in school: foreseeable **absences** must be reported to the teacher concerned in advance. Unforeseeable absences should be reported as quickly as possible for safety reasons.
- Your child's absences will be excused (approved) for reasons such as illness or accident of the child, illness or death in the family, change of residence, doctor's or dentist's appointment.
- The number of lessons which your child missed with a valid excuse, and any missed without a valid excuse, will be noted in the report.
- **Dispensations** can only be approved if a written request stating the grounds for the dispensation is submitted to the headmaster or headmistress four weeks in advance. Dispensations can be granted for reasons such as the following: celebrations of high religious feasts, important family events, attendance at a course in the native language and culture (HSK), and completion of trial apprenticeships.
- Parents are **entitled to keep their child out of school on up to five half days in each school year**. They need not provide any reason for their child's absence on these half days. Please inform the class teacher two days in advance if you wish to keep your child out of school for a half day.

problems such as hearing, speech or vision impairments, or postural or movement disorders.

Additional curricular and extra-curricular courses

Bildungs- und Freizeitangebote

Compulsory instruction in schools is supplemented by **optional activities**. Schools offer activities in the fields of music and crafts as well as interdisciplinary courses and projects.

Children can choose from among even more activities at lower secondary level. The optional courses are also free of charge for parents.

Courses in native language and culture (HSK)

give children and adolescents growing up with different languages the chance to extend their skills in their first language (mother's or father's language) and to learn more about the culture of their mother's or father's native country. These courses are funded by the states of the countries involved or by private associations. Fees may have to be paid for some of these courses.

Further information and a list of courses can be found at: www.erz.be.ch/hsk

Sports and other extra-curricular activities for children and adolescents are normally organised by private clubs and are based on voluntary work. An annual membership fee is usually required for a child to take part in the activities of such clubs.



Qualified teachers offer instruction in playing a number of instruments at the regional **music schools**. A fee is charged for the courses. A list of music schools can be found at:

www.vbms.ch/ueber-uns/musikschulen/

Information on sports and other extra-curricular activities is available from your local municipality.

Health

Gesundheit

Children and adolescents are examined by the municipality's **school doctor** in the pre-school and in school years 4 and 8. This examination is compulsory and free. Its purpose is the early identification of any health

If a child needs any further examinations or treatment, the school doctor will inform his or her parents and discuss the next steps with them.

The **school dentist** also regularly examines the teeth of children and adolescents. This examination is also compulsory and free. Parents will be informed if any treatment is needed. The costs of such a treatment must be borne by the parents themselves. Children are taught correct **dental hygiene** in compulsory school.

Please tell your class teacher if your child is suffering from any illness or has to take regular medication.

Information on children & health in various languages:

www.migesplus.ch > Kind & Gesundheit

2 Compulsory school

Goals and organisation

Ziele und Organisation

Pre-school and school encourage the acquisition of **knowledge, skills, attitudes and key competencies** with the aim of enabling children and adolescents to orient and integrate themselves within their environment and the society in which they live, to develop into responsible individuals and to complete an apprenticeship or go on to further schooling after their compulsory schooling.

The teaching staff plans its lessons on the basis of **curricula** that define the concrete objectives of the pre-school and school.

The **school boards** in every municipality are responsible for and supervise the running of the various schools. **School inspectors** ensure cantonal supervision on behalf of the education department.

Parents receive a request from the municipality to **enrol their children in the pre-school**.

Pre-school

Kindergarten

In pre-school, children learn by **playing** and play whilst **learning**. They learn to be more aware of themselves, to express themselves and to integrate themselves within a larger group of children, and they gain experience in dealing with their environment. Children are encouraged in their overall development in pre-school and are prepared to enter school. Pre-school teachers keep an eye on and support the development of each individual child, and discuss each child's progress with his or her parents.



Children who require **special assistance** in certain fields (for example linguistic or motor skills) are helped by additional specialist staff.

Pre-school usually lasts two years. Depending on how a child develops, the transition to **school (years 1–6)** may be postponed for one year, or the teaching subjects of year 1 may be spread over two years.

Children growing up with more than one language who do not understand and speak the local language well when they enter pre-school are given extra support. **A good command of German is essential for the later academic success of your child.** Make sure that your child has the opportunity to learn the local language by playing with other children before entering pre-school. Ask your municipality about **play and child care groups for children over the age of two**, such as parent groups, play groups or day-care facilities for children.

See also 'Parents' contribution to learning success' (p. 12).

In some municipalities, children in the pre-school and first two years of school may be taught together all or part of the time (mixed age group) (**Basisstufe** or **Cycle élémentaire**).

For detailed information on pre-schools in different languages visit:

www.erz.be.ch/elterninfo > Kindergarten

Primary level (years 1 – 6)

Primarstufe

In years 1 to 6, children acquire and strengthen their basic skills of **reading, writing and arithmetic**. They gain insights into their surroundings and become familiar with a range of work techniques. Frequently, coursework in different subjects will address the same topic. Primary level pupils begin to learn and work more on their own.

In year 3 the pupils in the German-speaking part of the canton begin to learn **French as their first foreign language**, those in the French-speaking part begin with **German**.

English has been taught from class 5 in both parts of the canton since 2013.

The **assessment procedure** for your child's move to the lower secondary level (years 7 to 9) (**Sekundarstufe I**) is carried out in years 5 and 6 (see following page).

Children who have difficulties achieving learning targets in certain areas (language, movement, learning, concentration) may be taught on the basis of individually defined learning targets or be assisted by specially trained teaching staff.

In such cases, a specialist department identifies the child's **learning problems** with the parent's consent and decides whether any support in the form of **special lessons** is necessary.

Special lessons (*Spezialunterricht*) are taught during teaching time in class or in groups outside the class. What's more, a number of municipalities offer children with learning difficulties the chance to attend a **special class**. A special class (*Besondere Klasse*) has fewer pupils than a normal class and is taught by staff members who have been specially trained to help children with learning difficulties.

Special lessons are also offered for **particularly gifted children**. An assessment by a specialist department is also a prerequisite for participation in these lessons.



Move from primary to lower secondary level

Übertritt von der Primar- in die Sekundarstufe I

An **assessment procedure** undertaken during years 5 and 6 determines the circumstances of your child's move from the primary to lower secondary level.

Teaching at lower secondary level (school years 7 – 9) is split into two to three **different levels**. Pupils are assigned to one of these levels in their 7th school year on the basis of their academic performance up to then and their expected further development. Class teachers explain the assessment procedure to children and their parents in year 5.

See also 'Lower secondary level' (p. 7) and 'After compulsory schooling' (p. 9).

Information on the compulsory school assessment procedure and the move from primary to lower secondary level can be found in different languages at:

www.erz.be.ch/beurteilung > Elterninformation

Lower secondary level (years 7 – 9)

Sekundarstufe I

At lower secondary level pupils are taught in two to three **different levels** depending on their performance:

The lower secondary level is split into *Realklassen* and *Sekundarklassen*. The pupils have to satisfy higher requirements in the *Sekundarklassen*. If pupils in a *Sekundarklasse* have good to very good grades they can prepare for admission to a higher school. Some municipalities organise special *Sekundarklassen* (*spezielle Sekundarklassen*) for this. Each municipality decides on its own whether pupils in the *Realklassen* and *Sekundarklassen* are taught completely separately or together in the same class depending on the subject.

The lower secondary level also offers support in the form of special lessons and classes.

Pupils in the lower secondary level are expected to perform more independent work on their own or in groups. Their general education is extended and deepened. In addition, the pupils are prepared for their choice of either an apprenticeship or attendance at a higher school. The **choice of profession** (*Berufswahl*) made by the young people depends largely on their personal interests, strengths and academic performance. The school supports this important process by dealing with appropriate topics in class. Pupils will receive help in making their decision from their parents, their class teacher and the career and study advisory centre.

The class teacher will inform you and your daughter or son, about the **requirements and expectations** associated with choosing a career and **looking for an apprenticeship** at the appropriate time.

See also 'After compulsory schooling' (p. 9) and 'Reports' (p. 4).

Newly arrived children and adolescents

Neuzuziehende Kinder und Jugendliche

If you have recently arrived in Switzerland, you may obtain information on your child's attendance at compulsory school from your local municipality. You can also register your child directly with the responsible headmaster or headmistress. Your child has to attend school as soon as he or she enters Switzerland with the intent to remain here for several months. Children can start school at any time throughout the school year.

Newly arrived children and adolescents will be assigned to the appropriate year (and at lower secondary level, to the appropriate level as well) following consultation with parents and previous teachers (or on the basis of the available school reports) depending on their age and number of years of schooling. The assignment of the headmaster or headmistress is initially provisional.

In the case of children or adolescents in year four or above, it may be sensible for those who have no knowledge of the language of instruction to repeat the last year of schooling they completed abroad, in order to have more time to learn the language and catch up on anything they may be missing in terms of subject matter.



Children and adolescents with no or only limited knowledge of the language of instruction are given additional support. The extra lessons in German **[Deutsch als Zweitsprache (DaZ)]** are free and are taught during teaching time either within or outside the class.

In urban municipalities, children with no knowledge of German or French often begin with a ten-week intensive course in the language of instruction.

Attending courses offered by sports clubs, day schools and courses in his or her native language and culture (HSK) may help your child **find his or her bearings faster in the new language and environment** and settle in socially.

See also 'After compulsory schooling' (p. 9).

3 After compulsory schooling

Education/training opportunities

Ausbildungsmöglichkeiten

The path to a certain profession or further schooling may be different from what you imagine: different from what it was in former times or – if you did not grow up in Switzerland – different from that in your native country. For example, there are now more than 250 professions for which training can be begun directly after compulsory school.

Further education/training after compulsory schooling is very important for your child's future: with no apprenticeship or further schooling his or her chances of finding a job and his or her wages will be lower. He or she may have no chances of further education and promotion.

Vocational education and training (VET)

Die Berufliche Grundbildung (Berufslehre)

Most young people learn their trade or profession after completing compulsory schooling in **vocational education and training (VET) (apprenticeship)**: They receive between two and four years **practical training in a company**. Over the same period they attend a vocational school (*Berufsfachschule*) for two to three days a week, where they learn more about the trade/profession and can expand their general knowledge. A **training contract** is signed between the trainee, company and vocational school. Some professions are also taught solely at specialised schools [*Handelsmittelschule (HMS)* and *Lehrwerkstätten*].

On account of the combination of practical training and school education, young people who are awarded a Federal VET Diploma usually have very good chances on the job market. And there are numerous opportunities to build on vocational education and training through further education or advanced training.

If they do very well, they may even opt to complete the Federal Vocational Baccalaureate (*Berufsmaturität*) programme during or after their vocational education and training: this entitles them to study at a university of applied sciences (*Fachhochschule FH*).

Further information on vocational education and training: www.erz.be.ch/berufsbildung

General education programmes

Die Mittelschulen

Upper secondary specialised schools [*Fachmittelschule (FMS)*] offer three-year courses of study for occupations in the field of health and education/social work.

Students who do very well at school and are prepared to work hard can attend **Baccalaureate schools** (*Gymnasium*). Baccalaureate schools begin in year 9 and last four years (it is also possible to start after year 9). The Baccalaureate schools offer comprehensive general education with various specialisation subjects. The Baccalaureate diploma (*Matura*) entitles the bearer to study at a university or Federal Institute of Technology without any examination or at a university of applied sciences after one year's practical experience.

A leaflet in various languages is available for **adolescents newly arrived** from a different canton or abroad who wish to continue their Baccalaureate school in the canton Bern:

www.erz.be.ch/aufnahmegym

Information on upper secondary specialised schools and Baccalaureate schools:

www.erz.be.ch/mittelschulen

Interim solutions

Zwischenlösungen

If your child's academic achievements or command of the language of instruction are still not good enough to allow him or her to begin his or her chosen education or vocational training at the end of year 9, he or she may be allowed to complete a **preparatory 10th school year**. This offer is also open to **newly arrived adolescents** between the ages of 16 and 18 with no or only little knowledge of the language of instruction: www.erz.be.ch/bvs

Find out more about this and other interim solutions in due time; ask your child's class teacher or the regional career and study advisory centre (*BIZ*).

Further information

Weitere Informationen

There are other offerings available after completion of compulsory schooling in addition to the education/training opportunities mentioned above.

Information on career choices and addresses of regional career and study advisory centres (*BIZ*):

www.erz.be.ch/berufsberatung

Information in various languages on choosing a career: www.berufsberatung.ch/dyn/8188.aspx

Education after the compulsory school: chart www.erz.be.ch/berufsbildung

4 Parents and compulsory schools

Cooperation

Zusammenarbeit

Parents and compulsory school have a legal obligation to work together. This cooperation should be based on partnership. The academic success and well-being of the child should always take priority.

Mutual information

Gegenseitige Information

Pre-school and school will inform parents of important events and projects in connection with the class (events, school trips, etc.) and schooling (assignment to a school or class, teaching times, etc.). This information will be provided in writing or at information events such as **parents' evenings** and **open days**. **Both parents** are expected to attend such events wherever possible. If neither parent is able to attend, please notify the appropriate member of staff and inquire as to how you can obtain the relevant information.

The pre-school and school will regularly inform parents about the (academic) development and behaviour of their child: a **parent-teacher meeting** (talk between the pupil's parents and class teacher) is held at least once every school year (see also Reports, p. 4). **Both parents** are expected to attend wherever possible. You will be consulted regarding the scheduling of this meeting.

If you feel you have not been told enough about the school itself or how your child is doing in class you are encouraged to ask the class teacher or the headmaster or headmistress.

You will be allowed to **sit in on lessons** in your child's class by agreement with the teacher.

Tell the class teacher about any circumstances or incidents that could affect your child's development and concentration.

See also 'Absences' (p. 4).

Translation

Übersetzung

It is important that you **understand** what is said at a parents' evening or during a parent-teacher meeting. It is just as important that you are able to **express your concerns** and **ask any questions** you may have. If your language skills are not yet adequate, you may bring an adult along to translate for you. The school can also arrange to have someone interpret for you during a parent-teacher meeting.

The interpreters arranged by the school are neutral, have been specially trained for their work and are sworn to secrecy.

Important decisions

Wichtige Entscheide

All important decisions on your child's school career (e.g. move from pre-school to the primary level and from here to the lower secondary level, promotion to the next year, assignment to a special class) will be discussed with you and your child. You have the right to be informed, heard and advised by the teachers involved and the headmaster or headmistress and may inspect any and all files relating to your child. Any **decision affecting your child's school career** will be taken by the headmaster or headmistress. The final decision must be communicated to you in writing with reasons stated. If you do not agree with the decision, you have the right to lodge a complaint with the school inspectors.

See also 'Reports' (p. 4).

Participation

Mitwirkung

Please let the class teacher know if you are willing and able to support your child's teachers, class or school through any kind of assistance such as accompanying trips out, helping in projects, small translations for parents of another child etc. This kind of help contributes to a good relationship between parents and teachers and a good atmosphere in the school.

A number of schools have a **Parents Association** made up of one or two parent representatives from each class. These are elected by the parents of the class at the beginning of every school year. The parent representatives of a class cooperate closely with the class teacher. Together they encourage contact between parents and the teachers of the class, as well as an exchange of ideas on educational and organisational questions. The parent representatives help solve any problems, provide support for class events and projects and represent the interests of the parents of the class in the school's Parents Association. The Parents Association deals with topics that affect the entire school (or at least one level).

You can find out more about parental involvement in your child's school from the class teacher or headmaster or headmistress.

5 Difficult situations at compulsory school

Maybe your child doesn't feel comfortable in their class or the quality of his or her work has suddenly dropped off. Perhaps your child is having problems with other children or you as a parent do not agree with a teacher's decision.

What to do in difficult situations

Vorgehen in schwierigen Situationen

The following procedure should be followed if a difficult situation relating to your child, the teaching staff or the class does arise:

1. The parents and teacher should get into contact, discuss the situation together and try to find a solution. As a rule, a satisfactory solution can be reached in this way.
2. If the parents and teacher cannot find a solution and one or both of the parties consider it necessary, the parents, teacher and headmaster or headmistress should meet to discuss the situation.
3. Should questions or situations of any kind arise for which no satisfactory solution can be found, you can submit the matter to the school board.

This procedure must be observed by parents and teachers. A translation can be arranged if necessary.

Measures in the event of disciplinary problems

Massnahmen bei Disziplinproblemen

The compulsory school ensures an orderly running of the school so that all of the children feel at ease and can learn well. The pupils must abide by the **school rules on community living** (rules of the house, class rules) and follow the instructions of the teaching staff, headmaster or headmistress and other staff. If any rules are repeatedly ignored or seriously broken the parents will be informed and the **procedure explained above regarding difficult situations** must be followed.

If the measures that are agreed do not bring about a positive change, the school can enlist the help of experts. If a pupil's behaviour seriously interferes with the proper running of the school, the school committee can issue a written warning or threaten to **expel the pupil from the school**. The school board can suspend a pupil from attending lessons for a period of up to twelve weeks in order to safeguard a proper running of the school. In the event of a (partial) expulsion, a suitable occupation will be organised by the enlisted experts in consultation with the parents and the school.

6 Difficult situations in parenting

You can also contact the class teacher if you have any questions relating to parental education and care. Discuss your experiences with other parents, too, to find out how they deal with similar situations.

Expert advice

Beratung durch Fachpersonen

In addition to your child's teachers, there are other experts available for you to consult: the educational counselling service in your region can offer support.

Contact the **educational counselling service**:

- If the problems you are having bringing up your children are such a burden that you are having difficulty coping with them on your own (disobedience, defiance, fears/anxiety, aggression, quarrels amongst siblings, problems dealing with peers, conflicts related to homework, long periods spent on the Internet, alcohol, drugs, problematic recreational activities etc. or if a child is always sad, for example, or refuses to eat).
- If the family is going through a difficult period (separation, divorce, other family problems, etc.)
- If a child is having difficulties at school (learning, performance or behaviour) and the exact reasons have to be identified before it can be helped (on the joint application of the parents and school)
- If problems exist within a class/school building (e.g. violence, discrimination)

Further information in various languages and the address of the nearest educational counselling service can be found here:

www.erz.be.ch/erziehungsberatung

Some municipalities have a **school social worker**. You can contact these experts too if you are experiencing any problems. They can advise you on the subject of your concern and will help you plan the next step if you wish.

If necessary, an interpreter can be arranged to facilitate talks with the educational counselling service or school social worker.

All of the experts named above are sworn to professional secrecy.

7 Parents help make school a success

The foundations for your child's good development will be laid in the first years of his or her life. Tips on coping with everyday problems can be found in the multilingual brochure 'Fit for school' ([Fit für die Schule](#)):

www.erz.be.ch/erziehungsberatung

You as parents can play a key role in your child's development at school:

Display an interest

- Maintain contact with the teaching staff and take part in as many school activities as you can. This shows your child that you think school is important. Exchanging ideas and cooperating with teachers will help your child get the best support it needs.
- Ask your child about what it has experienced and learnt at school.

Motivate and support

- Make sure that your child gets enough sleep and arrives at school with a breakfast in its stomach and a healthy snack in its bag.
- Don't bring your child to school (in a car). Walk him or her to school until he-she is confident enough to make the journey alone, either on foot or by bike.
- Make sure that your child does his or her homework and packs his-her school bag ready for lessons the next day.
- Trust in your child's ability to learn. Let him or her do as much as possible on his/her own.
- Praise your child for his or her efforts to learn and for persevering in the face of difficulties.
- Don't criticise your child for making a mistake; instead, try to figure out with your child how he or she can learn from the experience.

Encourage speech and first-hand experiences

- Speak to your child from a very early age. Tell him or her what you are doing and explain the world in which he/she lives. Listen patiently and answer any questions. Tell them stories and read to them from books.
- Do things together with your child: go on outings together, e.g. to the zoo, on a boat, to museums and into the countryside. In this way your child will experience the world with all of the senses and learn to understand relationships.

- Take your child to the library regularly and encourage reading.

Children growing up with several languages:

- Talk to your child in the language you feel most comfortable with. Stick to this even if your child answers in German.
- Make sure that your child can learn German from infancy. Be open to experiences with the local language and learn it yourself. Be a role model for your child.
- Send your child to lessons in their native language and culture (HSK): promoting language skills in the first language(s) (mother's/father's) is essential for good linguistic development.

See 'Growing up with several languages': www.erz.be.ch/hsk

Define rules for dealing with new media

New media (computers/Internet, mobile phones, email, chat, games, Facebook, Youtube, etc.) open up numerous possibilities and have become part of our children's everyday life. But experience has also shown that these media can be overused or misused for problematic purposes (online addiction, cybermobbing, portrayal of violence, pornography, etc.). Children and adolescents have to learn how to use these media responsibly.

- Don't put televisions and computers in children's rooms, instead, have them in a room the whole family uses.
- Take an interest in what your child does on the Internet; have him or her show you the games he/she plays and which communication forums and websites he/she uses.
- Establish clear rules on media consumption with your child, spelling out the consequences if these rules are broken: specify the amount of time per day/week, suitable programs, games and websites, codes of conduct on the web.
- Pay attention to the age limits set for TV programmes and computer games.
- Encourage your child to actively take part in recreational activities with the family or peers, including regular outdoor activities.

Tips for dealing with new media in various languages:

www.migesplus.ch > Kind und Gesundheit

www.sucht-info.ch > Elternbrief 8

www.cybersmart.ch

8 Glossary

Absences

Absenzen

Absences are times when pupils are not present for instruction.

Career advisory service

Berufsberatung

The experts in the career advisory service provide adolescents and adults with information and advice when it comes to choosing suitable vocational training or further education. They work in the regional career and study advisory centres (BIZ).

Class teacher

Klassenlehrperson

The class teacher is responsible for the educational and organisational management of the class. He/she is the first person to contact for any questions or matters relating to your child's attendance at pre-school or school.

Dispensations

Dispensationen

Dispensations are releases from lessons for regular or prolonged periods of absence. They must be planned in advance and applied for in writing from the headmaster or headmistress.

Education department

Erziehungsdirektion

The education department is the cantonal education authority. It specifies the framework conditions for compulsory schools in the municipalities and sets the curricula.

Educational counselling service

Erziehungsberatung (EB)

The experts from the educational counselling service advise families, children and adolescents in difficult situations and clarify reasons for learning problems. They work in the regional educational counselling centres.

Expert

Fachperson

Experts have been specially trained for a specific task. Teachers are experts for teaching and learning. Other experts help teachers and parents in their educational and parenting activities. These include, for example, experts in the educational counselling services, school social workers and those in the career advisory service.

Headmaster/Headmistress

Schulleitung

The headmaster or headmistress is responsible for the educational and organisational management of the compulsory school. He or she assigns the children to the individual classes and takes any decisions relating to the school career of the children.

Municipality

Gemeinde

The municipality is responsible for the local organisation of compulsory schools. It provides the school infrastructure: the school building, furniture and teaching materials. More information about what is available locally can be found on the website or at the local government help desk.

School board

Schulkommission

The school board ensures that children attend the pre-schools and schools in accordance with cantonal laws and the regulations of its municipality. It is also responsible for strategic decisions of its compulsory school.

School inspectors

Schulinspektorat

The school inspector supervises the compulsory schools in the canton.

School social worker

Schulsozialarbeit

A school social worker offers children and adolescents help and advice with social or personal problems. They also advise teachers and parents.

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